

THE
P L E A

OF THE
Harmless Oppressed,
Against the
Cruel Oppressor.

with Allowance.

THis Kingdom having suffered great Miseries and Calamities for several Ages and Generations past, and of late have been in a shaking unstable State and Condition, by reason of the great Animosities and Divisions amongst the Inhabitants thereof, and especially touching matters meerly concerning the Worship of God, which alone belongs to the Great God to appoint and order, whose Prerogative alone it is to rule in the Consciences of Men; for whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin, and the Scriptures saith, *Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind.* And now such is the dark depraved State of Man-kind, that tho his understanding be so darkned, and his mind thus blinded by the Prince of Darkness, who rules in the Hearts of the Children

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of Men, that he is always aspiring, and meddling with those matters that God hath reserved alone to himself, *viz.* to prescribe Rules, and make Orders for the Worship of God; tho the Lord hath threatned, that because their fear to him is taught by Mens Precepts, he will proceed to do a marvellous work, and a wonder, *for the wisdom of their wise men shall Perish*, &c. Jer. 29. 13, 14. Notwithstanding tho men generally in this Kingdom profess Scripture to be their Rule, yet with what Violence and Cruelty hath the contrary been practised? what Laws have been made under severe Penalties, to force People to this or that Religion, whether they have Faith in it or no? or whether it be the true Religion or no? for tho some that have been violent in forcing, yet concludes there is no infallibility, and so as some have been thus wicked in forcing, others weak in conforming having been thus put on the Rack either to suffer the loss of all thats near and dear to them in this World, or make Shipwrack of Faith or a good Conscience, and of everlasting Life in the World to come; but others have been so stedfast and resolved, so as not to Wound or D. file their Conscience, what Sufferings both in Prisons and spoyling of Goods have such undergone, this present Generation may afford pregnant and plentiful Examples.

And now on serious consideration of those violent Practices, in forcing in matters of Religion, and generally by Men of no true Religion, the forcing of many contrary to their Consciences, to preserve their outward Interest, and ruining others, who chose rather to lose their outward Concerns, to preserve their Conscience; whether this hath not been one of the greatest causes of those great Revolutions, Devallations, and Overturnings that have happened in these latter Days, let the wise Heart judg.

And then what can better tend to the Stability, Peace and Union of the Kingdom, then the removing the causes aforesaid? *viz.* those Laws by which many conscientious People have been Destroyed, and others divided in their Hearts one from another, and set one against another; and indeed even the worse of Men let loose to serve the *Devil*, & conscientious People prohibited to serve *God* in the way they were fully perswaded God required of them.

And

And the Lord having now put it into the Heart of our King to relieve many under those great Oppressions, and to propose a way for a future Settlement, as by his Princely *Declaration* is expressed, in which he hath exceeded all his Ancestors that went before him; of what weight is it for all his Loyal Subjects to joyn Heart and Hand with him in this Blessed Work, so much tending to the Glory of Almighty God, the Honour of the King, and the Peace and Tranquility of this Kingdom?

And now there being a Generation of Men that appears greatly in opposition to this Work, so happily begun, contrary to the expectations of many, which as the Heart of the King is upright before the Lord, the Everlasting God will stand by him therein, and frustrate all the Councils of those that oppose him, which generally are such whose Interest is greatly concerned therein, who may greatly pretend Worship, as sometimes *Demetrius the Silver-Smith* did when his Craft was in danger.

And now there being several able Pens that have writ on this Subject, to assert the Rights of *Liberty of Conscience*, and Answer the great Objection to the contrary, viz. *That if these Laws and Tests be taken away, the great danger that may ensue thereby, even the flowing in of Popery like a Flood.*

Which Objection, tho it have been sufficiently answered, yet it was before me to cast in my Mite, and offer a few Lines on this account, having taken notice of a certain Pamphlet entitled, *A Letter to a Dissenter*, and some Passages therein; its not my purpose to answer Particulars, it being sufficiently done by other Hands. The drift of that Paper seems to shew the danger of Repealing the *Tests*, as if there were no other way to keep out *Popery*; whose Principles and Practice have been so Dangerous and Cruel, insinuating as if all the promises of free Liberty in the Kings *Declaration* were but pretences to bring in a greater Bondage, and that those Addresses to him were first drawn for that purpose; and indeed, as if the King in his Declaration were not Sincere but Falacious; also intimating how safe it may be for the *Church of England* to be continued in Power, & what Indulgence she may give, saying, p. 5. *If you had to do with those ridged Prelates, who made it a matter of Conscience to give you the least Indulgence, &c. but kept you at an uncharitable Distance, and even*

to your more reasonable Scruples continued stiff and inexorable.

For answer, What kept out Popery before the Test was made? it being but about fifteen Years old, and whether it may not be kept out for the future without the Test as well as before? it seems to me that ways sufficient have been proposed.

And as for the Kings sincerity in his Declaration for Liberty of Conscience, what could he have done more then he hath done to assure his Subjects of his reallity therein, and that they may confide in him accordingly? but these Fears seems to arise from groundless Jealousies, rather the just cause, and evil Suspicion usually proceeding from an evil Disposition, that would uphold its own Interest more then the publick Good, and would have a Liberty to keep others in Bondage.

And as to what the Church of England may do to give Indulgence, and that if you had to do with those ridged Prelates, &c. some of their former Practices and Resolves may sufficiently manifest, whereof some Instances may be given; I may give two, first the Orders of the Quarter Sessions in the County of Devon, three of them in Print coming to my Hand, the first, the tenth of January 1681. the second, the twenty fifth of April 1682. and the third, the second of October 1683. to all of them is annexed the great Approbation and Commendation of the Bishop of Exon, with his order for all the Clergy in his Diocess to publish the same the next Sunday after tendred to them: I think it too large to expose them all in Print, but I think it convenient to Print the last of them, and I shall mention Particulars of their Resolves in the former, with some Observations thereon, and then leave it to the Moderate to judge.

But before I go on with this, it coming to my mind what the Author of the Letter saith, viz. It is not so long, since as to be forgotten, that the Maxim was, That it is impossible for a Dissenter not to be a Rebel. I may give a few Words in Answer hereunto.

It seems this to be the Maxim of the Church of England, I suppose none questions but that the Bishop, Justices and Grand Jury of the County of Devon, were Church of England Men. And in their Preface to the first Order, of the tenth of January 1681. they thus express themselves, viz.

“ For

Forasmuch as Religion is the Foundation of Civil Government, and while Faction and Schism is allowed and permitted in the Church, we can never expect Peace and Quiet in the State; and observing at this time (as we have by sad Experience heretofore) that those that dissent from us, in our Established Religion, of what Perswasion soever, tho at seeming Variance and Difference among themselves, yet they agree in their wicked attempts upon the Government, and their traitorous Plots and Designs against the Kings sacred Person— And therefore do unanimously resolve effectually to put the Laws in Execution against all Dissenters, whether *Papists* or *Sectaries*. And so by this its manifest that its their Maxim; and so you may see what Quarter the Dissenters are like to have from the Church of *England*. And in their Order of the second of *October* 1683. they thus express themselves, “ We have been so abundantly convinc’d of the Seditious and Rebellious Practices of the *Sectaries* and *Phanaticks*, who through the course of an Hundred Years, since we were first infected with ’em, have scarce afforded this unhappy Kingdom any interval of rest from their Horrid Treasons, as that we must esteem ’em, not only the open Enemies of our established Government, but to all the common Principles of Society and Humanity it self; wherefore that we may prevent their horrid Conspiracies for time to come, we resolve to put the severest of the Laws (which we find too Easie and Gentle, unless enlivened by a vigorous Execution) in force against ’em. Now observe,

O how horrible Zealous and Charitable are these Church Men of *England*! it seems nothing but a vigorous Execution of those Laws will serve their turn, and what these Laws are may be seen in a Book, lately put forth, called *Draconica*, which one whereof at least is Death without Conformity: Are these the old Friends that the Author of the Letter talks of? We may well say, *From such Friends, Good Lord deliver us*; far better venture to cast our selves on the new: May we not justly reason as the four Leperous Men did, that were without the Gate of *Samaria*, 2 *Kings* 7. 3, 4. That if they staid there they must Dye, and the like if they went into the City, and then resolved to fall into the Hoste of the *Assyrians*, &c. And what is our case better

ter in relation to our old Friends? for by these Lawes, here is nothing but loss of all visible Enjoyments, for the Conventicle Act will soon fetch all that away, and the Thirty fifth of *Elizabeth* takes Life and all, and no Ransom to be accepted, but the Shipwrack of a good Conscience, and so everlasting Life; a dear purchase indeed.

And as for the former Wars in this Land, may not the ground of them, in a great measure, be imputed to the violent Persecution of Church of *England* Men against People for their Consciences; and as for the late Rebellion, were none engaged therein but such as these Men call *Sectaries* and *Phanaticks*? Its well known to the contrary; Was not *Adonmouth* a Church of *England* Man? And the Lord *Gray* a Church of *England* Man? And other eminent Men who suffered, and the most part of those that were condemned on that account were such as did frequent the service of the Church of *England*; so that the Church of *England* Men are not the only Men free of that which is charged upon *Dissenters*.

And in their Order of the Tenth of *January* 1681 they say "We order and agree that all Church-Wardens and Overseers for the Poor, that shall give and allow any Relief to any that are able of Body, and do not repair every Sunday to their Parish Church, and there abide Soberly and Orderly during the whole time of Divine Service, no such contribution in the passing their Act shall be allowed. What Law there is for this I know not; some wise Church Men of some eminency have declared their opinion otherwise, but it seems by this *Devenshire Law*, the Poor must come to Church or Starve, and the Bishop highly approves this Order, and saith *They that signed it* (which were Twenty eight Justices of the Peace) *Have approved themselves, good Subjects to his Majesty, true Sons of the Church of England, and good Patriots of their Country*; The Lord will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice, but these Men will have Sacrifice without Mercy.

And in their Order of the Twenty fifth of *April* 1682. they say "That no Person shall be permitted to keep *Ale-Houses*, but such as repair to Church, and produce a Certificate that they have at least twice in the Year last past, received the Sacrament
" of

"of the Lords Supper, according to the usage of the Church to
 " *England*. Observe, it seems right or wrong they must receive
 it, or not sell *Ale*, tho they Eat and Drink their own Damnati-
 on; its the usage of the Church of *England*, but I find no such
 usage in the *Church of Christ*; and now consider here is Sacrifice
 required, but no Mercy to Body nor Soul.

And in the same Order they say. "And we would have all
 " those Schismatical Factious People, who upbraid us with the
 " countenancing Debauchery & Ludeness, to look back upon the
 " late times, and they will find it was their Schism and Rebel-
 " lion (and which was prologued with such an entry as this too)
 " which at first weakened, and at last brake down the Banks of
 " Government, and let in upon us a deluge of Profainness and
 " Irreligion. These Men would seem greatly to be against Pro-
 fainness and Irreligion, and Zealous for Worships and Services;
 Have they forgot, that within the memory of some yet alive,
 how there was a Book for Recreation to be used on the *Sunday*
 for Dancing and other Sports, was this to suppress or encourage
 Profainness and Irreligion, and by whom was that Book set forth,
 and ordered to be read in all Parish Churches in the Kingdom,
 and several Ministers suspended for refusing to read it? and
 when the Church of *England* (after a time of interruption) came
 again into her Seat, what a Flood of Wickedness followed; so that
 the King was then pleased to give forth a Declaration against it,
 expressing that he was ashamed of their Drinking of Healths,
 and other looseness, or to that effect.

And now these Men would throw all the Dirt they can upon
 Dissenters, and wipe their Mouthes, as if the Church of *Eng-
 land* were the only spotless Assembly; there's an Eye open that
 sees them, and how consciencious sober Men have Suffered by
 them, many of the Goals in this Kingdom are witnesses thereof;
 many others Particulars may be taken notice of, in these Orders
 worthy of observation, wherein that Spirit is manifested, that
 under the profession of Zeal for God, the Honour of the King,
 and the Preservation of the Established Religion (as they say)
 have Persecuted and Ruined many Sober Conscious, and Indus-
 trious Families and People; and the Bishop highly applauds
 these Orders, and gives order for the reading of them by the
 Clergy.

Clergy of his Diocess, in their Parish Churches, and subscribes to it *Tho. Exon.*

And because the Author of the said *Letter to Dissenters* saith, *If you had now to do with these ridged Prelates, &c.* I will give one instance more as before hinted, of a Prelate now, or very lately in being.

A certain Prelate acting as a Justice of the Peace, with some other Justices, convicted a Meeting of *Dissenters*, twelve Miles from their Homes, on the Oathes of two credible Witnesses, as they say (one of which not long after was convicted for Perjury, and stood in the Pillory for the same) Seven of these *Dissenters* coming before the said Prelate, or Bishop, and because it was so far from their Homes, borrowed each of them a Horse or Mare to ride; being fined Three Pounds a piece, they were all kept Prisoners in the Bishops Palace, until about seven at Night, it being in *February*, and in the mean time all their Horses taken away (tho not their own, nor either of the Owners at the Meeting) and sold or conveyed them away; the Horses were worth Thirty two Pounds Ten Shillings, the Owner of one of them redeemed his Mare for Seven Pound; and it being alledged that the seven Horses were not sufficient to pay the Fine, they ordered them to be had to an Inn, and strip of their Cloaths, it being dark, about seven at Night: One of the *Dissenters*, when they were come into the Street, said, *They would not go into an Inn, but if they would strip them, they should do it in the Street*, and there made a stand; and a Concourse of People coming about them, and they declaring their unchristian dealing with them, the Executioners were almost ashamed, and left the Prisoners, the Townsmen standing by them, and promised not one Cloath should be taken from them, and so they returned with the loss of the seven Horses.

Now what the Author of the *Letter* accounts ridgedness is a Question, if these Actions do not render these Men ridged Prelates, let Men of Moderation judg; many other particulars of Cruelty may be instanced, that Men of Civility and Humanity would even blush to hear of, acted by force of those Laws (utterly contrary to Christianity and Humanity) by *Church of England-Men* upon the *Dissenters*, which these *Devonshire Men* in one of their Orders do

do account the open Enemies to all the common principles of Society and Humanity it self; and now let the righteous just God judge between us, if Principles may be judged by Actions, who are the greatest Enemies to common principles of Society and Humanity? and if these Church Men do intend what they say, what Conscientious Man can enjoy a being amongst them, without Conformity to their Orders?

They further say in their Order of the twenty fifth of April 1682. "Having found the good effects of the Order and Resolutions agreed on last Sessions, for the putting the Laws in Execution against Dissenters, it having wrought so great a Reformation, and (in those parts where it was observed) reduced most of those wandering People into the Bosom of their Mother Church, which they had undutifully forsaken, we are encouraged and resolved chearfully to proceed in the Method we have begun.

But the Everlasting Almighty God hath beheld you, and heard the Cry of many poor Widows and Fatherless, who have been crush'd by your oppressive Laws, and cruel Executions, and put a stop to your Carriere, and at present put a limit to your Power for his Name sake and Elects sake.

But now let me a little inquire into the good effect of your Orders and Resolutions, & the great Reformation wrought thereby; you say, *You have reduced many wandering People into the Bosom of their Mother Church, &c* your meaning is, they come to Church, but are they converted conscientiously, to come there, or do they come only for fear of your cruel Intentions to put the Laws in Execution upon them? doubtless on the latter Account, and so they are but Profelites or Hypocrites; seems such Members will suite well with your Church, but what Benefit or Reward are you like to have from God or Man, thus to make Profelites or Hypocrites? how many poor Souls have you, by your cruel Laws, and Executions, made to violate their Consciences, and make shipwrack of Faith? I think the present thinness of your Assemblies may by this time convince you that you made but Hypocrites instead of Converts; consider seriously, was it ever the Practice or Order of Christ or his Apostles thus to force People to the Worship which he set up, and they practiced? was it not their way to

convince by a holy and humble Life and Conversation, and sound Doctrine? If you Object, *There were then no Christian Magistrates*; I answer, If *Christ Jesus* had seen need of them, for his Work, he could have Called and Converted them, but his way was to intreat and perswade by Love, and not to compel by Force.

And now, O that you had Hearts, to understand, Eyes to see, and Ears to hear, for the Violence and Oppression done by you to many of the Lords People, and Repent of your Doings, for God hath heard the Cry of the Oppressed, and is risen for their Deliverance, and do not strive to uphold those Laws which God will remove, and be still and quiet, least you be found Fighters against God, and the Lord break you to pieces.

For what ever your Imaginations are, that God, that hath the Hearts of Kings in his Hand, hath put it into the Heart of our King, to relieve many of the Lords Oppressed People, & break the Yoak of the Oppressor, and the Lord will stand by him in this Work, and overthrow the Attempts, and confound the Counsels of them that oppose him; many hath been the eminent Deliverances and Preservations the Lord hath afforded him, and who knows but that he hath reserved and brought him to the Crown for this very purpose; for the Work is the Lords that he hath begun, & its very acceptable to him, and what Peace and Quietness hath his Subjects enjoyed under his Government? only some that disturb themselves with their own Fears, because such disappointments are come upon them, so that they are ready to fret & curse their God and their King, *Isa. 8. 21.* And nothing will satisfie such, but such Liberty to themselves, by which they may keep others in Bondage.

I say unto such, Take heed how you meddle with Gods Prerogative, his Rule in the Consciences of People, he hath long born with you on that account, and your time is now to Repent of what you have done, and not strive to keep up that Power which God will destroy; and be content to enjoy equal Liberty with your fellow Subjects, and let those Laws and Tests, by which People hath been thus long enslaved, be taken away, and that such a *Magna Charta* may be made, so that it may never be in the Power of any Person or Persons whatsoever to Tyranize or bear Rule

Rule over the Conscience of any, or Ruin or Oppress them in their Persons or Estates on that account; but let every one walk in the way of his God, and Worship him as God shall perswade him in his Conscience, and then sit down quietly under his own Vine, *Micah 4. 4.*

But its the great Artifice of that Spirit, that would usurp Authority over the Conscience, to perswade People, *That if the Test be taken away, then Popery will come in.* The *Test* is but about fifteen Years old, and what hath kept it out before the *Test*, as is said before, Our God is a God of Justice and Mercy, and he requires it of Men, and let it be done to all, and trust God with the event; do not People thus reasoning manifest their forgetfulness of God? as indeed they have in making and severely executing those Laws, to the Ruin of many Conscientious People.

And now I cannot well omit to observe the Spirit and Temper of the Author of the *Letter to Dissenters*, What Insinuations he uses; sometimes as if the *Church of England* were blamed for Compliance, and accounted *Trimmers* for enduring *Dissenters*, and then how safe is it to keep to them, and many Insinuations against the King, as his dispensing Power, (tho to save many of his Subjects from Ruin) and as if all he did were to advance his own Prerogative, with many Insinuations tending to alienate the Hearts of his Subjects from him, and then with a Spirit of high Arrogancy speaks proudly, saying, *What-ever may be told you at this very hour, and in the heat and glare of your present Sun-shine, the Church of England can in a moment bring Clouds again, and turn the Royal Thunder upon your Heads, blow you off the Stage with a Breath, if She would give but a Smile, or a kind Word, the least glimps of Her Compliance would throw you back into the state of Sufferings, &c.*

Now indeed, if we measure the *Church of England* by this *Letter* and the *Devonshire Order*, and *Resolves*, we were of all People most Miserable, however we are not affrighted at high Words, *Psa. 12. 3. The Lord shall cut off all flattering Lips, and the Tongue that speaks proud things,* But he farther saith, *the Church of England, with all her Faults, chuses rather to bear the weight of Power then ly under the burthen of her being Criminal:* It

seems she would be accounted Innocent with all the violence, and Cruelty, Ruin and Spoyl, she and her Purjured Informers, and envious Priests hath done upon many honest consciencious Men, but the just God will reckon with her for all; and I cannot yet believe that she is so formidable, that the King or we have need of her smiles, or fear the want of them, what vertue they may be of to us we know not, the Informers and such like have had them as yet, and indeed there must be a great change in her, or us if ever they fall to our lot; however we have lived under her cruel frowns, and are yet alive, tho she frowns at that too, when God shall fulfil that which he hath spoken by the Mouth of the Prophet, *Isa. 33. 1. Then let such beware,* and therefore its good for them not to be high minded, but fear: The Author saith, *It cannot be said that she is unprovoked: Books and Letters comes out every Day;* It seems it is but by Books and Letters; &c. It is not by Goals, and spoyleing of Goods, and raining of Widdows and Fatherless, as she hath provoked God, and many of his People, and will she now be offended that she can do so no longer. Why should she not be contented to enjoy equal Liberty with others. God forbid that any of us should do to her as she hath done to us, and that for our Consciences towards God; but if the Lord will do it, who or what can hinder it, but her timely and unfained Repentance.

And now my dear Country-Men that are *Dissenters*, by those Papers before mentioned, you may see what is the minde of those *Church Men*, and therefore as the Lord puts an opportunity into your hands for future Liberty, be diligent to improve it, and use the best endeavors for the removing those Laws and Tests by which so many have cruelly suffered; and trust God, who will bring to pass his great Work, and if he have raised up and preserved the King for that purpasse, and endued him with Wisdom and Courage for that end, lets trust him also in his Gracious Declaration, and often repeated Resolutions for that purpose, and pray unto God for the prosperity of this Work in his Hands, and not believe, the vain insinuations of such who profess much Loyalty to him, while he is serving their ends, but in the disappointments thereof, becomes his secret Enemies.

And

And if any inquire who, and what I am, they may assure themselves that I am a *Dissenter* from the *Church of England*, and have fo been more then Forty Years; and be assured also, that I am not a *Roman Catholick*, but one that desires the Good of all Men, and that none may suffer for Conscience sake, and do pray for the King and those that are in Authority under him, that we all may lead our lives in all Godliness and Honesty, and that as the Lord hath begun this great Work by him, so he may live to see the same perfected, and that he may have his Reward from God accordingly, and we all a peaceable Government under him, that God may have the Glory of all for ever.

I am of the pure Religion, which is to visit Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and keep unspotted of the World.

Devon ff. *Ad General. Quarterial Session. Pacis Dom. Regis tent. apud Castr. Exon. in & pro Comitatu. præd. Secundo die Octobris, Anno Regni Dom. nostri Caroli Secundi Dei gratia Angliæ, Scotiæ, Franciæ, & Hiberniæ Regis, Fidei Defensor, &c. Tricesimo quinto, Annoque Dom. 1683.*

WE have been so abundantly convinced of the Seditious and Rebellious Practices of the Sactaries and Phanaticks, who through the Course of above One hundred years since we were first infested with 'em, have scarce afforded this unhappy Kingdom any interval of rest from their Horrid Treasons, as that we must esteem 'em, not only the open Enemies of our Established Government, but to all the common Principles of Society and Humanity it self. Wherefore, that we may prevent their Horrid Conspiracies for the time to come, and secure (as much as in us lies) our most Gracious KING and the GOVERNMENT from the Fury and Malice of 'em, we resolve

olve to put the Severest of the Lawes (which we find too Easie and Gentle, unless enlivened by a vigorous Execution) in force against 'em.

1. We Agree and Resolve, in every Division of this Country, to require sufficient Sureties for the good A-bearing and Peaceable Behaviour of all such as we may justly suspect, or that we can receive any credible Information against, that they have been at any Conventicles & Unlawful Meetings, or at any Factious or Seditious Clubs; or that have by any Discourses discovered themselves to be disaffected to the present Established Government, either in Church or State; or that have been the Authors or Publishers of any Seditious Libels; or that shall not in all things duely conform themselves to the present Established Government.

2. Because we have a sort of False Men, and more perfidious than professed Phanaticks, who either wanting Courage to appear in their own shape, or the better to bring about their Treasonable Designs, privately Associate with, and encourage the Seditious Clubs of the Sectaries, and with them Plot heartily against the Government; and yet, that they may pass unsuspected, sometime appear in the Church with a false shew of Conformity, only to save their Money, and the better to serve their Faction: That we may (if possible) distinguish and know all such dangerous Enemies, we will strictly require all Church-wardens and Constables, at all our Monthly Meetings, to give us a full account of all such as do not every Sunday resort to their own Parish Churches, and are not at the beginning of Divine Service, and do not behave themselves Orderly and Soberly there, observing all such descent Ceremonies as the Laws enjoin: And that they likewise Present unto us the Names of all such

such as have not received the Holy Sacrament of the Lords Supper in their own Parish Churches Thrice in the Year.

3. Being fully satisfied, as well by the clear Evidence of the late Horrid PLOT, as by our own long and sad Experience, That the Non-conformist Preachers are the Authors and Fomenters of this Pestilent Faction, and the implacable Enemies of the Established Government, and to whom the late Execrable Treasons, which have had such dismal effects in this Kingdom, are principally to be imputed, and who by their present obstinate refusing to Take and Subscribe an Oath and Declaration, *That they do not hold it Lawful to take up ARMS against the KING, and that they will not endeavour any Alteration of Government either in Church or State;* do necessarily enforce us to conclude, that they are still ready to engage themselves, (if not actually engaged) in some Rebellious Conspiracy against the KING, and to invade and Subvert his GOVERNMENT: Wherefore we resolve in every Parish of this County, to leave strict Warrants in the hands of all Constables, for the Seizing of such persons. And as an encouragement to all Officers and others, that shall be instrumental in the apprehending of any of them, so as they may be brought to Justice, we will give and allow Forty shillings, as a Reward, for every Non-conformist Preacher that shall be so secured. And we Resolve to prosecute them, and all other such Dangerous Enemies of the Government, and common Absenters from Church, and Frequenters of CONVENTICLES, according to the Directions of a Law made in the Five and Thirtieth Year of the Reign of Queen ELIZABETH, Entituled, *An Act for the keeping Her Majesties Subjects in due OBEEDIENCE.* Lasty.

Lastly. That we may never forget the infinite Mercies of Almighty God, in the late Wonderful Deliverance of our Gracious KING, and His Dearest BROTHER, and all His Loyal Subjects, (who were designed for a Massacre) from the Horrid Conspiracy of the Phanaticks, and their Accomplices; and that we may perpetuate as well our own Thankfulness, as their Infamy, that the Generations to come may know their Treachery, and avoid and never trust men of such Principles more; and also that we our selves may perform our publick duty to Almighty God, before we enter upon the publick Service of our Country: We Order, Resolve, and Agree, with Advice and concurrence of the Right Reverend Father in God our much Honored and Worthy Lord *Bishop* to give and bestow for the Beautifying of the Chappel in the Castle of *Exon*, and for the erecting of decent Seats there, Ten pounds: And we will likewise give and continue Six pounds to be paid yearly to any one of the Church of *Exon*, whom the said Lord *Bishop* shall appoint, to read the *Divine Service* with the Prayers lately appointed for the day of Thanksgiving on the Ninth of *September* last, and to Preach a Sermon exhorting to O-BEDIENCE, in the said Chappel, on the first day of every general Quarter-Sessions of the Peace held in the said Castle, to begin precisely at Eight of the Clock in the Morning.

And may the Mercies of Heaven (which are infinite) always protect our Religious and Gracious KING, his Dearest BROTHER, and every Branch of that ROYAL FAMILY; and may all the Treasonable Conspiracies of those Rebellious Schismaticks be always thus happily prevented.

Hugo Vaughan, Cler. Pacis Com. præd.
The

That the continued Care of His Majesties Justices of the Peace for the County of DEVON, for the Safety of His Majesties Sacred Person, the preservation of the Publick Peace, and advancement of true Religion, may be fuller known, and have a better Effect; I do hereby Order and Require all the CLERGY of my Diocess within the County of Devon, deliberately to publish this Order, the next Sunday after it shall be tendred to them.

The. Exon.

Postscript.

I Intended brevity in this Paper, for should I have set my self to answer all Particulars in the said *Letter and Devonshire Orders*, it might amount even to a Volume, to set forth the secret Treachery & false Insinuations against the King in the *Letter*, and cruel Intentions and Resolutions in the *Devonshire Orders*, before mentioned. However, I thought meet that the last of these Orders may be with what is before expressed exposed to publick view, that all may see the nature of that Spirit, which hath exercised such Cruelty on Innocent People, and what their Resolutions further were, if the Lord for his Ele&t sake, had not raised up, and put it into the Heart of the King to shorten the days of their Power; and against all the Jealousies and Fears suggested, that this present Liberty and Freedom is but to make way for further Bondage and Slavery, that so they may uphold those cruel Laws and Tests, for a future opertunity to exercise their former Tyranny, and is it Condemnable in the *Church of Rome*, and Justifiable in the *Church of England*.

Its left to the serious consideration of all that loves true Freedom rather than cruel Bondage, whether it be not far better to accept and trust the King, for the Liberty and Freedom promised in his Princely Declaration, and since often confirmed by expressing the reality and sincerity of his Resolutions therein, then labour to uphold those Laws and Tests that may inable those *Church of England Men* to prosecute their cruel Intentions and Resolutions.

Resolutions in those Orders express'd, which tho' but the Orders and Resolutions of the Bishop, Justices and Grand Jury of one County, yet without much straining may be taken for the general Resolutions of the *Church of England*, whose Practice hath spoken forth as much.

Yet one thing more coming to my view, I leave to be considered, the Author of the *Letter* saith, *The Church of Rome doth not only dislike the allowing of Liberty, but by its Principles it cannot do it.* I answer, Is not the Principles of the *Church of England*, and some others not far different, tho' Dissenting from them, the same? their practices have evinced it. However the King hath not only declared it to be his Principle, *That Conscience ought not to be forc'd, and that all Men ought to enjoy the Liberty of their Conscience*; but hath performed the same accordingly. And when the former King *Charles the Second* had given out a Declaration to that purpose, what opposition did the *Church of England* make against it, pretending a dislike of the manner of it, but never offered to do in a way which they might account legal; but rather crush'd it in the Bud, plainly manifesting their Principles to be such, that none should enjoy that Liberty but themselves; and now are greatly offended that the King that now is hath done it; so that its evident, it should never be done if they could help it: And now whether it be not best for the *Dissenters* to chuse the New Friends before the Old; but they say, *This will not hold*, its good to hold it while we can, and if it be taken away we are but where we were before, some in Goals till Death set them at Liberty, and others Goods spoyled by the worst of Men, being let loose for that purpose, and no guard for them, unless purchased with the loss of a good Conscience.

I further answer, suppose the Principles of the *Church of Rome* be such, the *Church of England* is the same; but can neither of these be Converted from such Principles? they are not likely while they account them Just and Good: Now that the *Church of England* do so account them their Sentiments in the *Devonshire Orders* do manifest, and their Resolves to prosecute them accordingly, and what else can be expected should hinder them, for they will have their Sacrifice, tho' without Mercy to the poor Widdows and Fatherless; for if they will not come to
Church

Church and stay their all the time of their Divine Service, they must have no Relief by their *Devonshire Law*, and so here's little hope of the Conversion of the *Church of England* from this Principle, and therefore its good that those Laws may be taken away that gives them power to put them in Practice.

And now whether that the King, if his Principles were such as these Men suggest, (but himself otherwise affirms) whether there be not a possibility that he may be Converted? Was not *Paul* while *Saul* a Persecutor, yet by the Lords Power Converted? King *Manasseth* the like. And now whether there is not as much hope of this Kings Conversion as the *Church of England's*, if not from his Religion, yet from this Principle, which yet he hath declared is not his Principle, and by his Practice hath put a limit to the same, and proposed a way to cut off its Power forever, and settle Freedom, & Liberty of Conscience, so that it shall not be in the Power of after Ages to alter it; and so let's try whether the King intends as he says, and let a Parliament when called be ready to joyn with him therein; and I doubt not but the Everlasting Almighty God will add a Blessing unto a Work so acceptable to him.

And therefore let me conclude with this, *The Lord Bless and Prosper the King in this Work he hath begun, and discover all the secret Conspiracies, Councells, and Contrivings of all that design to oppose or hinder the same, and Crown him with Everlasting Life in the World to come.*

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